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**STANDARD CERTIFICATE OF LIVE BIRTH (FORM R-101)**  
POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR CERTIFICATES  
PREPARED AT A HOSPITAL OR BIRTH CENTER

**INFORMANT SIGNATURE**

**STATUTORY AUTHORITY:**

**"Chapter 46: Section 3A. Hospital administrator's duties; report; verification.**

Section 3A.... Such copies shall be signed or otherwise verified by the mother in a manner developed pursuant to regulations promulgated pursuant to section 4 of chapter 17, or, if she is not able, then by the father or other responsible adult, attesting to the truth and accuracy of the facts appearing in the report. Such copies shall also be signed or otherwise verified, in a manner specified under regulations promulgated pursuant to section 4 of chapter 17, by the physician, certified nurse midwife or hospital medical officer in charge of such birth or by an administrator designated by the hospital as overseeing birth registration."

**POLICY IN BRIEF**

Whenever possible, the Standard Certificate of Live Birth should be fully completed at the hospital or birthing center. Birth records should rarely be left pending for the sole reason of a missing informant signature. In many cases, a registered record can be amended to correct true errors; but, if left unregistered, the record may become a "Delayed Record of Birth" causing the newborn lifetime problems with his or her birth certificate.

In most cases, the mother is the person who will be available to verify the record.

Informants should be provided with a ball-point black ink pen and instructed to bear down so that all three copies of the birth certificate show a visible signature.

Use of the RVRS-provided "Parent Worksheet for Birth Certificates" is encouraged as it provides evidence of parent information for non-parental informants.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMON SITUATIONS**

If a situation falls outside of those listed below, call the Registry of Vital Records and Statistics (RVRS) (617) 740-2605 or -2623 for further instructions. Hospitals and City/Town Clerks may also contact RVRS regarding informant signatures at [vital.guideline@state.ma.us](mailto:vital.guideline@state.ma.us).

### **Parents Married/ Mother's Current Last Name/ Father's Current Last Name/ and Child's Last Name are All the Same**

A signature shall be procured consistent with the following priorities:

1. 'Mother' or both 'Parents' are the preferred informant(s).
2. If mother is not available, then 'Father' is the next preferred informant.
3. If mother and father are not available, then the hospital administrator in charge of the birth registration unit is the next preferred informant.

Birth certificate preparers should make a reasonable effort to obtain a parent signature within 10 days of the birth. When a hospital administrator signs as informant, it is recommended that a notation be filed with the child's medical record, or other filing system, that indicates the reason why a parent signature could not be obtained.

### **Parents Married/ Mother's Current Last Name/ Father's Current Last Name/ and Child's Last Name are Not All the Same (*including hyphenated, mother retains maiden name, etc.*)**

A signature shall be procured consistent with the following priorities:

1. Both 'Parents' are the preferred informant.
2. If both parents are not available, then 'Mother' is the next preferred informant.
3. If mother is not available, then 'Father' is the next preferred informant.
4. If mother and father are not available, then the hospital administrator in charge of the birth registration unit is the next preferred informant.

Birth certificate preparers should make a reasonable effort to obtain both parents' signatures within 10 days of the birth. If this is not possible, one parent signature should be obtained. If neither parent signature can be obtained within 10 days of the birth, and no accommodation can be made to obtain the signatures within a reasonable extension, then a hospital administrator should sign the record as informant. It is recommended that documentation should remain with the child's medical record, or other filing system, that shows that the child's name, and other certificate information, is as the parent(s) intended (e.g., Parent Worksheet for Birth Certificates) and why a parent signature could not be obtained. One reason that both parent signatures is desirable (*but not required*) is to avoid complications later when one or the other parent objects to the last name of the child and tries to correct it.

**Mother Not Married/ No Father Listed/ Mother's Current Last Name and Child's Last Name are All the Same**

A signature shall be procured consistent with the following priorities:

1. 'Mother' is the preferred informant.
2. If mother is not available, then the hospital administrator in charge of the birth registration unit is the next preferred informant.

Birth certificate preparers should make a reasonable effort to obtain a mother's signature within 10 days of the birth. When a hospital administrator signs as informant, it is recommended that a notation be filed with the child's medical record, or other filing system, that indicates the reason a mother's signature could not be obtained.

**Parents Not Married/ Acknowledgment of Parentage (and Affidavit of Non-Paternity, if appropriate)**

A signature shall be procured consistent with the following priorities:

1. Both 'Parents' are the preferred informant.
2. If both parents are not available, then 'Mother' is the next preferred informant.
3. If mother is not available, then 'Father' is the next preferred informant.
4. If mother and father are not available, then the hospital administrator in charge of the birth registration unit is the next preferred informant.

Two signatures are required for the Acknowledgment (and Affidavit) form(s). In most cases the birth certificate should be prepared and signed at the same time. Parents must use the same signature, when signing as informant, that is used on the Acknowledgment and Non-Paternity forms. If both parents are not available (as when the acknowledgment/ affidavit is sent out of facility to obtain a signature), one parent's signature should be obtained. If acknowledgments/affidavits are correctly completed, but neither parent's signature can be obtained within 10 days of the birth, and no accommodation can be made to obtain the signatures within a reasonable extension, then a hospital administrator should sign the record as informant. It is recommended that documentation should remain with the child's medical record, or other filing system, that indicates the reason why a parent signature could not be obtained on the birth certificate. Notarized signatures on the Acknowledgment are sufficient to show that the name of the child, and other certificate information, is as the parents intended.

**Illegible Signatures or Signatures that Do Not Match Names**

Informants should sign with their usual signature (as used to sign legal documents, bank checks, and driver's licenses, for example). Although, notarization is not necessary on the informant signature, verification of signature should be requested in cases where the signature is illegible and/or does not appear to match the name on the certificate.

If the signature is illegible, and does not look like the name that appears on the birth certificate, then the birth certificate preparer should verify in the margin of the birth certificate that the signature is that of the mother/father/informant. A notation should appear in the margin of the birth certificate stating "Witnessed By:" with the name and title of the preparer.

If the signature is legible, but does not match the current last name on the birth certificate, the birth certificate preparer should inquire as to whether the listed current name is correct. The information about the mother and father on the birth certificate should reflect the name that the mother/father currently and commonly uses on other current forms of identification. Create a new birth certificate if the current names are not correct. Minor variations in name, such as 'Smith-Jones' on the record and 'Smith' on the signature are not reasons to reject a signature, if the preparer verifies that the names are correct, and the signature is that which is commonly used by the informant.

If neither parent can sign because of illiteracy, a mark (e.g., "X") is acceptable if the notation appears in the margin "Witnessed By:" with the name and title of the preparer.

If the contains non-Roman characters (e.g., Chinese or Cyrillic), ask the parent(s) if they have an English-language signature. If not, a notation should appear in the margin "Witnessed By:" with the name and title of the preparer. If so, the parent(s) should sign in both languages.

### **"Other" Informants**

Other "responsible adults," not included in the priority lists detailed above, that may appear as informant on the birth certificate without prior approval by RVRS include:

- Director of Medical Records
- Hospital President or CEO

Other non-parent custodial signatures (such as by DSS), are not advised. To provide the newborn with a certificate that looks "normal," even if an adoption or other court action is anticipated, a hospital administrator signature is preferred.

In special situations, such as with deceased parents, close relatives (e.g., mother's parents or sibling) would be acceptable.

### **Note: Newborn SSN Request may not be Processed if neither Parent is Informant**

If the informant is other than the mother or the father, then RVRS may not process a request for a newborn social security card. If neither parent is available to sign, select "No" for "Social Security Card." SSN requests must be initialed on the margin of the record by the mother or by the father (if he is the informant).